1: Rattray E, G-5 (ca. 1920)1932
FE11 Tallensi FE11
Kusase

In a corner beside this *wen bay* is another lightning protector, a long stick with one end bent into a hoop, also a pot containing roots. 'When the rain does not fall, I sacrifice to it, saying, "God and the land, I want to beg water, because corn, beans, and other grain are withering." When it does rain, the person who made the sacrifice has to stand here in the rain for some time and not go into the room. The bent stick is for tying the lightning. Before this sacrifice is made, and before the rain is called, the one who is about to do so, bathes with water in which the roots in the pot are soaked.' This particular *dog*, which is that of the senior wife, contained the following huts:

(*a*) A small hut for boys, sons of the *Yi-dan* called *bis dog* (boys' room).
(*b*) The hut of the senior wife of the *Yi-dan*.
(*c*) A kitchen (*daan*), *daana* in Nankane, unroofed, but behind it is another kitchen, roofed, used in the wet season.

Each *dog* is identical in construction; a sleeping-room, and a dry- and wet-season kitchen surrounded by its own private yard. In the centre of all these women's quarters is a square hut, called *yi-dan-dog* where the head of the compound sleeps. Joined on to the above compound, but with a separate entrance, is another compound, a replica of the first. It is that of the eldest son of the *Yi-dan*. Among the Kusase, as among the Nankanse, an eldest son may 'go out', that is go away and build a new homestead some hundred yards or more from that of his father, or he may have his home adjoining that of his parent but with a separate entrance. The son in this case had done the latter. He possessed his own *Wen bay* (*Yini* in Nankane), not a large flat-topped circular shrine like his father's, but just a small earth mound. This son's compound contained three yards, each containing one living hut and two kitchens. He had a separate grain-store independently of his father. Among the Kusase these grain-stores are not inside, but outside the compounds, differing in this respect from the Nankanse.

The *zoy* hut, already mentioned, also contained the 'medicine pot', set by his slayer, for the spirit of a man who has been murdered or killed in war. This shrine, after the death of its original owner, will be kept in the *zoy* hut (compare the Nankane *tobega*). The following is a description of this custom among the Kusase.

'When one man kills another, he has to get a *yur* (pot). This pot he will "set" and bathe with the medicine which it contains for

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

attractive touch to an otherwise uninspiring landscape. A fringe of uninhabited bush, the home of a fair amount of game, follows the course of the two Voltas. From the Tong Hills the area of close settlement and perennial cultivation spreads out like a fan to the west, north, and east. Generally speaking, settlement is relatively sparse and recent along the periphery of this area, except in the north to north-west segment, and densest and most ancient in the middle.

The Northern Territories of the Gold Coast have been under effective Government control for about twenty-five years. From the first efforts were made to develop modern communications. At the present time a main road, suitable for motor traffic, connects Bawku in Kusaasi district, the northernmost administrative station, with Tamale, the capital of the Northern Territories, 145 miles to the south, and continues from there to Kumasi in Ashanti, another 220 miles. Branches link it with the principal Government stations in the Northern Territories. This road system was maintained, until recently, only for essential services in the wet season, but was always passable in the dry season. In 1936 large-scale works were undertaken to make it a permanent highway. Head carriage and footpaths still remain the only means of local transport and communications. About 50 miles of this road system traverse the Zuarungu district, the administrative head-quarters of which is at Zuarungu (Talni, *Zuwaruŋ*) on the central road.

The people we are concerned with in this book occupy less than half of the Zuarungu district. Their country, which, for convenience of reference may be called Taleland, embraces most of the southern half of the district between the two Voltas and the western boundary. On the north it can be demarcated only by an arbitrary boundary which extends in a wavy line from Zuarungu due east to the river. A typical section of the district, Taleland includes the Tong Hills, the vicinity of which harbours the densest and oldest settlements of the country. Its total population, according to the 1931 census, numbers about 35,000. Nearly a third of it is concentrated within a radius of two or three miles of the Hills. I estimate the total area of Taleland at about 300 square miles, which would imply an average population density of approximately 100 to the square mile, though the actual density of settlement in the inhabited areas must be considerably higher. Thus Taleland is thickly populated, by African standards.

Cultural Affinities of the Tallensi

Delafosse, in his monumental survey[1] of the peoples of the western Sudan, distinguished five 'families' by ethnological and linguistic criteria. His largest division, the Voltaic family, comprises the tribes inhabiting the basin of the Volta rivers, from approximately 9° 30′ to 14° N. latitude.[2] Delafosse subdivides the Voltaic family into seven branches, one of which, the Mossi group, includes all the peoples living between Ouagadougou in the French Upper Ivory Coast and Salaga in the Gold Coast.

More recent research has not invalidated Delafosse's broad classification.

[1] Delafosse, M., *Haut-Sénégal-Niger*, 3 vols., 1912.
[2] Op. cit., i, pp. 115 ff.

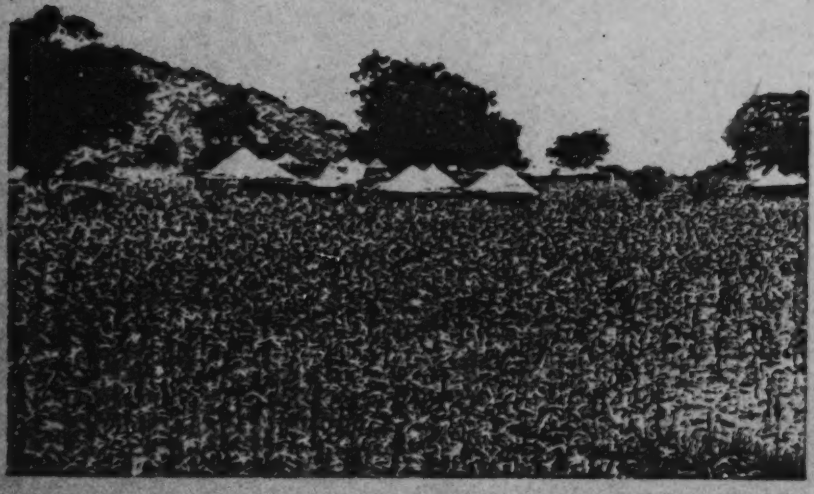
2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

[facing p. 16]

PLATE I

241
361

(a) Outskirts of a Tale settlement in the late dry season. In the distance (right) a sacred grove (*tɔŋgban*).



(b) View of a Tale settlement about the middle of the rainy season.

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

101 in the culture of this area. A member of one social group identifies another social group or individual by comparison or contrast with his own social identity, and in terms of the most inclusive grouping which suffices to identify the latter unambiguously. The exact identification is relative to the frame of reference common to both parties.

101 304 Wherever he may come from in Taleland, a man calls himself a Talǝŋ in contrast to non-Tallensi, citing differences of speech and custom. Thus, female circumcision is practised over a large part of the Northern Territories. All the Tallensi think it a repugnant custom, and say: 'We Talis don't do that—it is a custom (lit. work) of the Gǝris (*Tam Talis pu ɛt lan—Gǝris tuomǝr nla*).' But Tallensi from different parts of Taleland draw almost equally sharp distinctions amongst themselves, using the same technique of contraposition.

361 103 133 621 To understand this we must consider the spatial distribution of Tale settlements. For Tale social structure is inseparable from the spatial relations of social units. We shall start from Tongo (Talni, *Tɔŋ*), about a mile from the foot of the hills (see sketch-map, p. 15), one of the most thickly populated settlements in the country and regarded by the Administration as the capital of Taleland. Typically of this part of the country, Tongo and the settlements adjacent to it on all sides—Ba'ari, Zubiuŋ, Zoo, Soog, Wakii, and Gbeog—form a continuous area of habitation thickly studded with homesteads. Beyond this aggregate stretches another ring of settlements indistinguishably continuous with it at many points. On one side of Ba'ari live its Gǝre neighbours, on the other is Yaɣazuor, which is separated only by small hillocks and a block of bush-farms from Kpatia, Kpal, and Gbee. The farthest homesteads of Zubiuŋ lie against a low bulge in the plain from the bouldery tip of which one looks down on Sǝk and Yamǝlǝg, a mile or two away. Zoo and Gbambee merge into one another and overlook Woo. Soog, Wakii, and Gbeog encircle the slopes of the Tong Hills and are separated from Tenzugu, the settlement in the fertile hollow embracing almost the entire summit, only by the ridge of enormous boulders which forms the crown. Gbeog overlaps Ka'ar, which is continuous with Gorogo, Sipaat, and Sii. These settlements climb right up into the gullies and amongst the boulders of the slope of the Hills and straggle out across the broad plain to blend with Dkoog. The homesteads of Sii curl round the nose of the Hills to mingle with those on the outskirts of Yinduur and Zandoya, on the other side below the rim of the Hills. A mile farther along, at the foot of the Hills on their eastern side, are the more scattered homesteads of Santeŋ, Teelǝg, Syɛk, and Wǝɣar, separated from Tenzugu only by the brow of the Hills.

This compact block of settlements is barely separated from a similar block five or six miles north-east of the Hills which begins at Sawalǝg. Between Zoo and Yamǝlǝg lies a mile or so of stony hummocks, covered in parts with the low scrub which shows that it had been cultivated and then abandoned. This is where many people from Tongo and Zoo have their bush-farms. Yamǝlǝg occupies a shallow depression between hillocks.

361 103 621 Then comes a stretch of two or three miles of typical orchard bush before the homesteads of Sawalǝg and Sie are reached. Thence a traveller can

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

continue through Sie-Tɛndaaŋ or Namɔyalug to Gban, Gar, and Kpatia or to Buug, Duusi, Datɔk, and beyond to Pieluŋ and Nangodi with scarcely a break in the continuity of settlement.

In addition to these two main blocks of settlements—let us call them, for convenience, the Tongo district and the Sie district—there are scattered Tale settlements, separated from them and from one another by stretches of bush, between them and the Volta rivers—Namooraana, Diga'ar, Tola, Kumbude, Biuŋ, and Gbiug-on-the-river being the most important. But other settlements on the frontiers of Taleland, the inhabitants of which are not recognized as Tallensi by outsiders, also fall into the framework of their political geography.

The first puzzle a stranger must unravel, if he hopes to understand the life of our people, is the apparent contradiction between the density of residential aggregation and the cleavages underlying their social relations. He will meet it latent in simple and casual occurrences, or conspicuously overt in organized collective events such as the communal hunting and fish drives, the Great Festivals, or other ceremonial gatherings.

Taleland is thickly populated. The Tongo district alone has a population of over 12,000 according to the 1931 census. This area of ancient habitation—*tɛŋ kɔrəg*, an old country, as the natives describe it—has supported a sedentary population for a period which cannot be less than several centuries. Sacrifices are made on graves of ancestors said to have lived ten or eleven generations ago. No one familiar with the people would doubt the authenticity of these graves; but the three centuries or so of settlement this implies must, I believe, be considered a minimum period. Centuries of intermarriage have woven a web of kinship which embraces the whole country. The patterns of institutions and ideas are uniform throughout Taleland. Yet a fundamental dogma of their collective life is that of local and sectional particularism, and of divergence within the common patterns.

The 'Real Talis'

Neither the Tongo people, nor those living in the Sie district, are considered to be real Talis; the 'real Talis' are the folk who live on and around the Tong Hills. The Great Festivals are usually cited as a decisive criterion of classification. The 'real Talis' (*Talis mɛŋa*), a Tɛnzugu elder once stated, are in the following places: Tɛnzugu, Santɛŋ, Yinduur, Sii, Gorogo, Wakii, Gbeog, and Soog, as well as the small settlements near Santɛŋ and the offshoots of Wakii at Gbambee and Woo. '*Tam tɔmɔra Talis tuntuoma, ti Gɔlib ni ti Bɔyaraam*—We perform the works of Talis, our *Gɔlib* and *Bɔyaraam* festivals.' Tongo and Zoo, Yamɔlɔg and Sie, are Namoos, he continued; and Zubiuŋ and Sɔk, Ba'ari and Yayazuor, belong more closely to the Namoos than to the Talis. '*Bam tɔmɔra namoorɔt*—They celebrate (lit. work) after the Namoo fashion, the *Giŋgaaŋ* and *Da'a* festivals.' There remain Sawalɔg, Sie-Tɛndaaŋ, Duusi, and the settlements close to them. '*Bam lɛbɔra Namnam sani*—They fall in with the Namnam' (whose chief festival is called *Tɛyɔn-lɛbɔgɔt*.)[1]

[1] A brief account of one aspect of these festivals is given in my paper 'Ritual

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

CHAPTER X

THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF A SETTLEMENT

Introduction

621 A TALE settlement is a miniature of the whole society, and reveals all the basic principles of the social structure. No two settlements are identical in topography, shape, size, or social composition; but all have the same social form, based on the same principles. Yet it is no easy task to describe a settlement as the natives see it. It cannot be isolated from neighbouring units of the same kind by inspection; for though it is locally fixed it is not territorially circumscribed. Its structure is unintelligible without reference to the lineage system, but ecological exigencies and political and ritual ties and cleavages play an important part in it as well.

361 The anatomy of a settlement appears in fullest relief during the dry
221 season. Then the homesteads stand out starkly against the dun background of bare earth or the glare of rocks and boulders piled up in red-grey masses in the hilly areas. The foot-paths winding between the homesteads scar the land as if etched into it by generations of feet. Every shade tree in front of a homestead is an inviting landmark. Sacred groves, looking temptingly cool when the sun is high, are unmistakable. The water-holes, pits, and ditches, flooded beyond recognition in the latter part of the rainy season, can easily be distinguished. The boundaries of farm-plots, overgrown with crops and weeds during the rains, are now clearly visible. The landscape is a map of the social relations of the people. This is the season, too, when life goes on largely in the open. There is leisure for gossip and conversation; for paying visits, strolling in the market, going a-courting, making long journeys, dancing in the moonlight; for hunting and fishing drives; there is time also, and the necessary supplies, for the performance of funeral ceremonies and other ritual activities. It is in such events that the structure of Tale society is most vividly actualized.

Types of Settlement and Distribution of Population

361 Two main types of settlements are found: those of ancient habitation (*tɛŋkɔrəg*, old country), covering all the centre of the country, especially on and around the Tong Hills, and including the majority of the Tallensi; and those of recent foundation (*tɛŋpaaləg*, new country), towards the periphery of this area. Though the basic plan is the same, the principles on which a settlement is built operate with different emphasis in each type.

361 Neither territorial extent nor density of aggregation affects the basic
621 plan of a settlement. The range of variation is very great. Moreover, processes of expansion and contraction continuously alter the extent of a settlement. Thus, Yamələg and Tongo are ancient settlements of the same general structure, though the latter is four or five times the size of

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

the former; and Biuŋ, with 25 homesteads and less than 400 inhabitants, is a peripheral settlement of the same type as Datɔk, which has over 600 homesteads and between 5,000 and 6,000 inhabitants. The whole of Biuŋ can be seen from one of the hummocks on which it stands, but it takes an hour's ride on horseback to get round the whole of Datɔk.

The density and distribution of habitation varies somewhat from one part of the country to another. The broad undulating plain on the north side of the Tong Hills permits of dense settlement, whereas the plain stretching south and south-east of the hills carries a relatively sparse population.[1]

Differences of altitude and of drainage probably explain this. During the rains a large part of the southern plain becomes too waterlogged for cultivation or for human habitation. Many of the Hill Talis went to live there when they were dispersed in 1911.[2] Though they have always cultivated bush farms there, wherever the lie of the land is suitable, they look back on their exile as a doubly miserable interlude on account of the uncomfortable and unhealthy conditions in which they had perforce to live. Accustomed to their well-drained hills, they hated the interminable swamp, as it seemed to them, into which the plain is transformed during the rains; and hardened though they are, they found the mosquitoes and other noxious insects that swarm there during this season an intolerable plague.

From the top of the Tong Hills, looking northwards, one has a view of what seems to be an endless plain, dotted meagrely with trees, and studded closely, as far as the eye can reach, with homesteads. They are identical in appearance, squat, circular, drab-grey or red, like the soil itself, mostly thatch-roofed, and seem to be scattered indiscriminately, some close together, others farther apart. There is nothing to indicate where one settlement ends and the next begins. Homesteads here, in the old settlements, are often no more than 20 yards apart.

The density of population is greater in the old than in the new settlements, and greater in the vicinity of the Tong Hills than in settlements nearer to the periphery. I cannot state how great the difference is, as I had neither the time nor the training for a comprehensive demographic survey. Sociological observation suggests that the amount of arable land available is an important factor, though not the only one, determining density of population in the older areas of settlement. This is as one would expect of a sedentary population of subsistence farmers. In the new settlements there is ample land, and men have large home farms immediately adjoining their homesteads, which are therefore often as

[1] I have no exact figures. From the statistics given in the census of 1931 (*Appendices containing Comparative Returns and General Statistics of the 1931 Census, Gold Coast*, Government Printer, 1932) it appears that the large area lying between Pwalɔg (Kpalɔg), the centre of the Tong Hills, and a straight line from there to the Red and White Volta—that is, this southern plain—had about 5,000 inhabitants in 1931, only one-seventh of the total population of Taleland. This included many people who were then in exile and now live on and around the Tong Hills.

[2] By order of the British Administration, after the punitive expedition against them. Cf. p. 12 above.

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

much as a quarter of a mile apart. The greater congestion of the older settlements is correlated with greater fragmentation of holdings, due to the greater length of time they have been continuously occupied.

The population of Taleland, as of the remainder of the trans-Volta plateau, appears to have been increasing steadily in the recent past. In the older settlements it is clearly excessive in relation to the available land and the level of technical skill of the natives. This is the opinion both of Government officials and of the natives themselves. The natives always say that shortage of cultivable land was the main incentive for the migration of young men to the peripheral 'bush' zone in the past; and the men who have come to settle permanently in the peripheral settlements during the last two or three decades always ascribe their move from their natal settlements to the same cause. Labour migration during the past ten or fifteen years has been much influenced by pressure of population on the land in the most congested areas.

These economic adaptations of the natives and their general standard of living, as well as the territorial distribution of such clans as Mosuor biis in Taleland, compel the inference that the population has been increasing for some time. But adequate statistics for measuring the present rate of increase in the population, or for establishing its trend in the past, are lacking.[1]

There are no clear-cut geographical features regulating the distribution of homesteads in most settlements. The location of water-supplies has no bearing on it, since Tale agriculture relies wholly on rainfall, and domestic requirements are a secondary consideration, and offer no difficulties in the wet season. Towards the end of the dry season the domestic consumption of water is cut to the minimum necessary for cooking and drinking. When water is scarce, the average Talaŋ is content to go unwashed for weeks at a stretch. By the end of the dry season most surface supplies have vanished, and water is usually obtained from shallow pits, artificially deepened and enlarged from time to time by those who use them. These pits are regular water-holes (*bulag*), utilized solely for that purpose throughout the year. A large settlement has several, situated in the dry beds of what are strong streams (*kolag*), or in the depressions (*bo'og*) which become swamps and pools during the rains. A water-hole generally serves the needs of the homesteads within a radius of about a quarter to half a mile. But at times of acute shortage the women and girls may have to go a mile or more to fill their water-pots.

Variations in elevation influence the scatter of homesteads to some extent. Inured though they are to the discomforts of their climate, the Tallensi prefer to build on high ground if possible. Thus, in the older settlements, homesteads tend to cluster closer together where there is a rise in the ground, and to be few and far between where there is a de-

[1] Reliable reproduction rates, either for the Northern Territories as a whole or for Taleland in particular, cannot be calculated from the data given in the abstract of the census of 1931, and there are no other official statistics, published or unpublished, which could be used for this purpose. My own exiguous demographic data suggest that the population of the older Tale settlements is increasing, though not steeply.

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

pression liable to flooding in the rainy season. The people of the Tong Hills consider themselves to be particularly fortunate in this respect. Their homesteads stretch densely across the slopes of the hills, and amid the great boulders and rocky piles of the summit. Singing the praises of their tiny fastness, they contrast it with the plain, where one is always ankle-deep in mud and slush during the rains and scorched by the sun in the dry season. On the hills, they say, a sheltered nook can always be found among the rocks, shady when the sun is most cruel, dry in the severest storm, where the children can play or the grown-ups sit and talk.

The Stability and Continuity of a Settlement

Stability and continuity are essential characteristics of a settlement. They are implied in the native concept of a *tɛŋ* (settlement) as both a definite locality and a fixed community. The ancient settlements have attained a very high degree of stability and continuity. The peripheral settlements are rapidly ceasing to be mere economic apanages to the older centres of habitation, and are taking on the form of permanent and stable units. Being still in process of organization, their structure is fluid compared with that of the ancient settlements, and the dynamic factors of Tale social structure sometimes appear more conspicuously in them than in the latter.

But the older settlements are by no means static. The bounds, the layout, and the internal constitution of a settlement alter continuously, if very slowly. Even in a single year one can see how processes of expansion and contraction, of segmentation and incorporation, are at work all the time. Whenever land changes hands by inheritance, or an office passes by succession, or a man achieves economic independence, a minor reshuffle in the collocation of homesteads takes place. The cumulative effects of these processes of slow but progressive readjustment are clearly exhibited in the contemporary structure of a settlement. They are documented in its constitution and layout, in the location of ancestral graves, the ownership of farm plots, and in ceremonial and political relations. Fixity of location and of the structural plan ensure the stability and continuity of a Tale settlement.

Topographical Distinctions and the Natives' Knowledge of Natural History

Precise local orientation is essential in the economic activities and social relations of the Tallensi. Place-names are often derived from prominent topographical or geographical features. Thus, Tɛnzugu means the head (*zug*) or highest part of the country (*tɛŋ*), Yaɣazuor means 'perched on a hill', and many other place-names are popularly believed to be corruptions of topographical or spatial metaphors. Within a settlement topographical variations are distinguished by terms like *tɛŋr*, the lower part (the locative of *tɛŋ*, here in the sense of 'ground'), and *saazugu*, the higher part (lit. head-high, or high up). Conspicuous patches of low-lying land, hillocks, rock piles, ditches, water-holes, streams, &c., are named, and are very often sacred spots. The name may indicate peculiar qualities of the soil, prominent trees, or other landmarks formerly or still

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

living at Zoo and Gbambee, though they are an integral part of the community.

Like all Tale settlements Tongo has no fixed territorial boundaries. (See map at end of book.) Its frontiers with the circumjacent settlements take the form of a social circumference, kept in being by local, genealogical, and politico-ritual ties and cleavages. This is the line of ecological and social balance between Tongo and its neighbours, more or less stable now, but still undergoing minor readjustments as this balance changes with alterations in the internal equilibrium of any of these units. It is most stable and firm where the genealogical, political, and ideological cleavages between Tongo and its neighbours are clear-cut and dominant; it is more pervious where Tongo's structural ties with an adjacent clan have greater strength than the cleavages between them. Thus, there is a distinct though sometimes narrow territorial separation between the outermost homesteads of Tongo and those of Wakii, Soog, Gbeog, and Ba'ari. At one point on the west side of Tongo only a stretch of cultivation separates Tongo homesteads from Wakii homesteads a stone's throw away. Tongo homesteads actually lie on the Wakii side of the watercourse which might have formed a natural boundary between them. On the south this watercourse and a straggling outcrop of rocks and boulders hedge in Tongo and mark it off from Wakii. A prominent landmark here is Samoo, a mass of huge rocks overgrown with trees and scrub. It is a sacred spot, the External *Bɔyar* of Soog and Gbeog. North of Samoo lies Tongo, the nearest Tongo homestead being about 50 yards away; south of it are Wakii and Soog. It would be most unlikely for a Tongo man to build his homestead on the south side of Samoo, or for a Soog or Wakii man to live north of it. For Samoo symbolizes all that the Namoos consider alien, hostile, and to some extent repugnant, in the cultural differences and structural cleavages between themselves and the Hill Talis. In olden days the immediate vicinity of Samoo was the no-man's-land where the two groups used to meet in battle.

Soog, Wakii, Gbeog, and Ba'ari, all Talis clans that were among the traditional enemies of Tongo in war, are all demarcated from the latter. On the border between Tongo and each of these clans is a stretch of land, cultivated or uncultivated, but free of homesteads, which is still thought of as the traditional battle-ground of the two groups. It is significant that these battle-grounds are all associated with Earth or *Bɔyar* shrines under the ritual jurisdiction of the Talis clans.

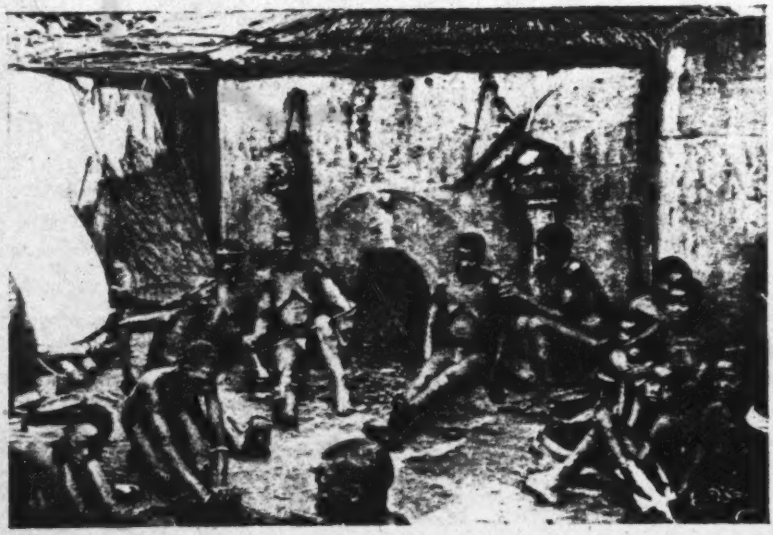
By contrast it is impossible to draw a clear line between the homesteads of Tongo and those of Zubiun or Zoo. They merge completely. This corresponds to the close ties which have always existed between these three units and have enabled them to fuse easily into a single political community under the authority of the Chief of Tongo, since his acquisition of judicial and executive power under British rule.

In the old days Zubiun and Zoo always fought on the side of Tongo against the Hill Talis. Both clans have direct politico-ritual roles in connexion with the Tongo chiefship, and come into its immediate field of influence, whereas the Hill Talis and Ba'ari come into its secondary field of influence. The three clans act as *sunzɔp*-by-courtesy (cf. ch. V) to

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

PLATE VIII

571
341
283
291



(*a*) The solidarity of clan sisters. During the funeral of the family head clan sisters of the widows, who have married into the same or adjacent clans, come to sit with them and console them.

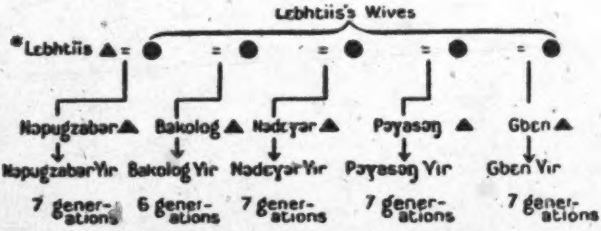
361
415
252

(*b*) One of the senior clan-sisters (*poyayabolis*) of the deceased supervises the cooking of the beer for his funeral rites.

[facing p. 161]

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

Diagrammatically, the agnatic filiation of the branches of Lɛbhtiis yir (or biis) can be represented as follows:



These five segments form a set of co-ordinate segments, all except Bakolog yidɛm reckoning seven generations inclusively between their present lineage heads and their common ancestor, Lɛbhtiis. Their corporate unity and common interests are symbolized by the ancestor shrine dedicated to the 'fathers' (*banam*) of the lineage, culminating in Lɛbhtiis. This is the *bɔyar* of Lɛbhtiis, the *banam bɔyar* (shrine of the forefathers) held by the head (*kpeem*) of the whole lineage, who may be a member of any of the five *dugɔt*. In 1934 the head of Lɛbhtiis yidɛm, Naandɔmɔr, who was also head of his own segment of Nɔpugzabɔr yiri died, and as his final funeral rites were not immediately performed, the *banam bɔyar* remained in the custody of his son, who carried out the duties of head of the whole lineage in his late father's name. Naandɔmɔr's prospective successor as *kpeem* of Lɛbhtiis yir was Yinyɛla, the *kpeem* of Bakolog yir.

Each segment also has its particular *dugni bɔyar* (shrine of the 'room'). This, as will be explained presently, is known as its 'mothers'' *bɔyar* (*manam bɔyar*)—the shrine of its eponymous founding ancestor among the sons of Lɛbhtiis, and his mother—the symbol of its differentiation, by reference to maternal origin, from its brother (*sunzɔ*) segments of the same descent, and of its specific corporate unity and identity in contraposition to those other segments.

Each segment tends to form a coherent residential cluster, situated on land which has been owned by its members for several generations, and in close proximity to the graves of their ancestors. The lineage as a whole tends to form a local aggregate, though a somewhat looser one than any of its segments. But not all the members of the lineage reside in Puhug, or at Tongo, at a given time. There are its married *pɔyaɣabɔlis* (women members) and absent male members. In Nɔpugzabɔr yiri two young men were away in 1934, one farming in Mampurugu, another working somewhere in the colony; three of the younger 'sons' of Bakolog yir were away at Kumasi, where they had been for several years. One subsegment of Pɔyasoŋ yidɛm has been established at Yamɔlɔg for a generation or so; and several members of the other two segments were away in Mampurugu and Ashanti.

Numerically Nadɛɣɔr yir is exceptionally small, for it has only eleven male members. The other segments have between twenty and thirty male members each, counting infants as well. Numbers, we must again emphasize, do not in any way affect the status of a lineage or the rights

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

This small sample is typical of the relationships that unite neighbours at Datɔk. The settlement is divided up into such clusters of homesteads, numbering anything from four or five homesteads to about a dozen, which have grown up around the homestead of a man who migrated to settle there forty or fifty years ago when Datɔk was still uninhabited bush.

Gradually the original settlers were joined by younger members of their lineages and kinsmen, migrating for economic or psychological reasons but drawn to this particular place by their kinship ties. Often several such clusters of homesteads close to one another, the owners of which are linked among themselves by ties of lineage or kinship, are grouped round men who are themselves linked by lineage or kinship. They are the original settlers, or more usually the sons or grandsons of the original settlers, who built their homesteads far apart from one another so as to have ample land for cultivation close at hand, and then 'cut' (*ŋma*) parcels of this land for the immigrants who filtered in subsequently.

In these conditions a great deal of intermarriage takes place between neighbours and within the local community, since many different clans are represented in the community. Tallensi are more inclined to marry people who live nearby than to take spouses from a distance; and at Datɔk marriage between the children of men who happen to be neighbours because of their kinship with a third man, but are themselves not related, is very common.[1] This weaves the mesh of kinship ties yet more finely, binding neighbour to neighbour still more closely and firmly.

It is evident that the corporate life of a community like Datɔk—and this applies only in a lesser degree to other peripheral settlements of mixed origins—must differ in many ways from that of the older settlements. Two clans, Gar and Gban, are numerically and politically dominant at Datɔk, just as Zoo is at Biuŋ, and the Hill Talis are at Mɔyaduur, and the people of these numerically superior clans or lineages can co-operate and unite for action in the same way as the segments of the clan do in the old settlements. People who have very few or no clansmen or lineage brothers in the settlement are in a different position. In Tale jural and ceremonial relations all matters of importance are dealt with corporately by lineages. Thus, if a Ba'ari man living at Datɔk suffers a bereavement, takes a wife, marries off a daughter, gets involved in a dispute, or has to make an important sacrifice, he has to call upon the elders of his lineage and clan at Ba'ari to support him in the action required. His extra-clan kinsmen at Datɔk cannot give him corporate assistance, though they would be individually helpful. Similarly he takes part in the economic, jural, and ceremonial events in which his Datɔk neighbours and kinsmen are involved only as an individual actuated by ties of personal kinship and concern for the welfare of particular people. In other words, these outlying settlements are still politically inchoate. They are still mainly social and political apanages of the older settlements from which they have been colonized; very many of their members are still tied into the structure of their natal clan-settlements, and are still

[1] I state this in a general way, as I did not take a sufficiently large sample of marriages at Datɔk to give a numerical indication of the extent of marriage within the settlement.

2 Fortes
131, 133, 361, 487, 778, 764, 621

FE11 Tallensi FE11

[Chart of sections of end-map:

A	B	C	D
E	F	G	H

]

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

621
487
778
131
764
133
361

MAP OF PART OF TON

Conventional Signs

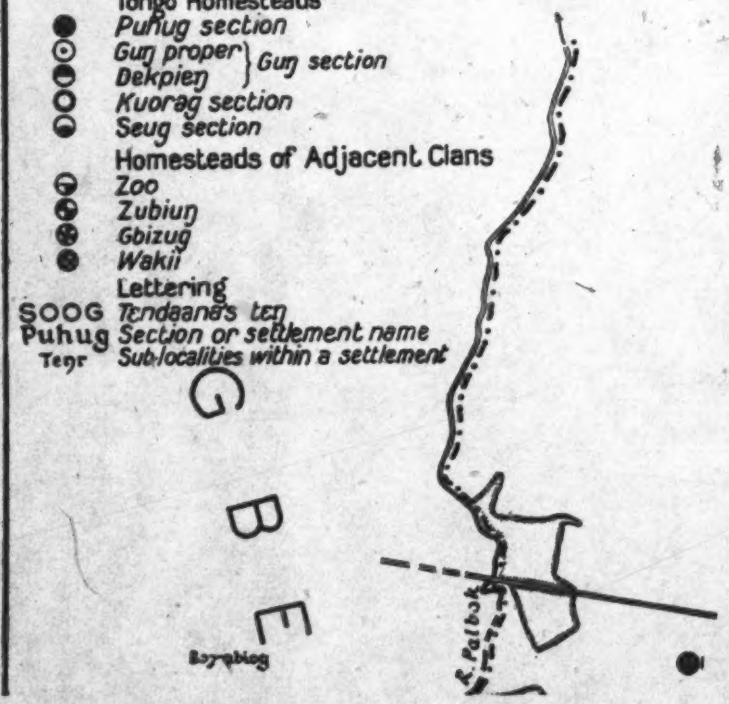
- Government roads (dry season)
- Major footpath
- Minor footpath
- Rainy season stream, dry season ditch
- Rainy season rivulet
- Tendaana's territory (tɛŋ) boundaries
- Farm boundaries
- Swampy patches (rainy season)
- Graves
- Tree
- Sacred Groves
- Water holes

Social Divisions
(each circle is one homestead)

Tongo Homesteads
- Puhug section
- Gun proper, Dekpien } Gun section
- Kuorag section
- Seug section

Homesteads of Adjacent Clans
- Zoo
- Zubiun
- Gbizug
- Wakii

Lettering
- SOOG Tendaana's tɛŋ
- Puhug Section or settlement name
- Tɛŋr Sub-localities within a settlement



[End-map (A)]

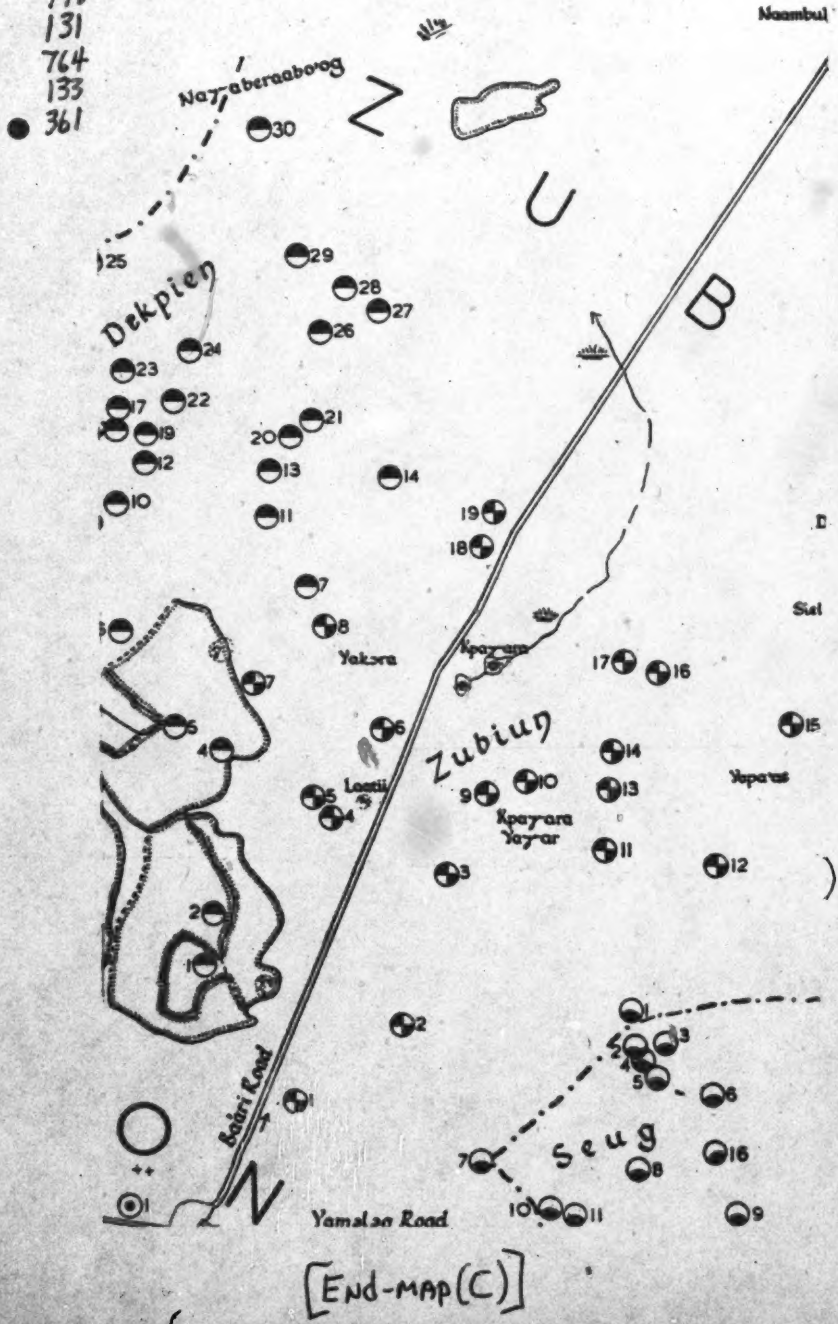
621
487
778
131
764
133
361

TONGO

[End-MAP(B)]

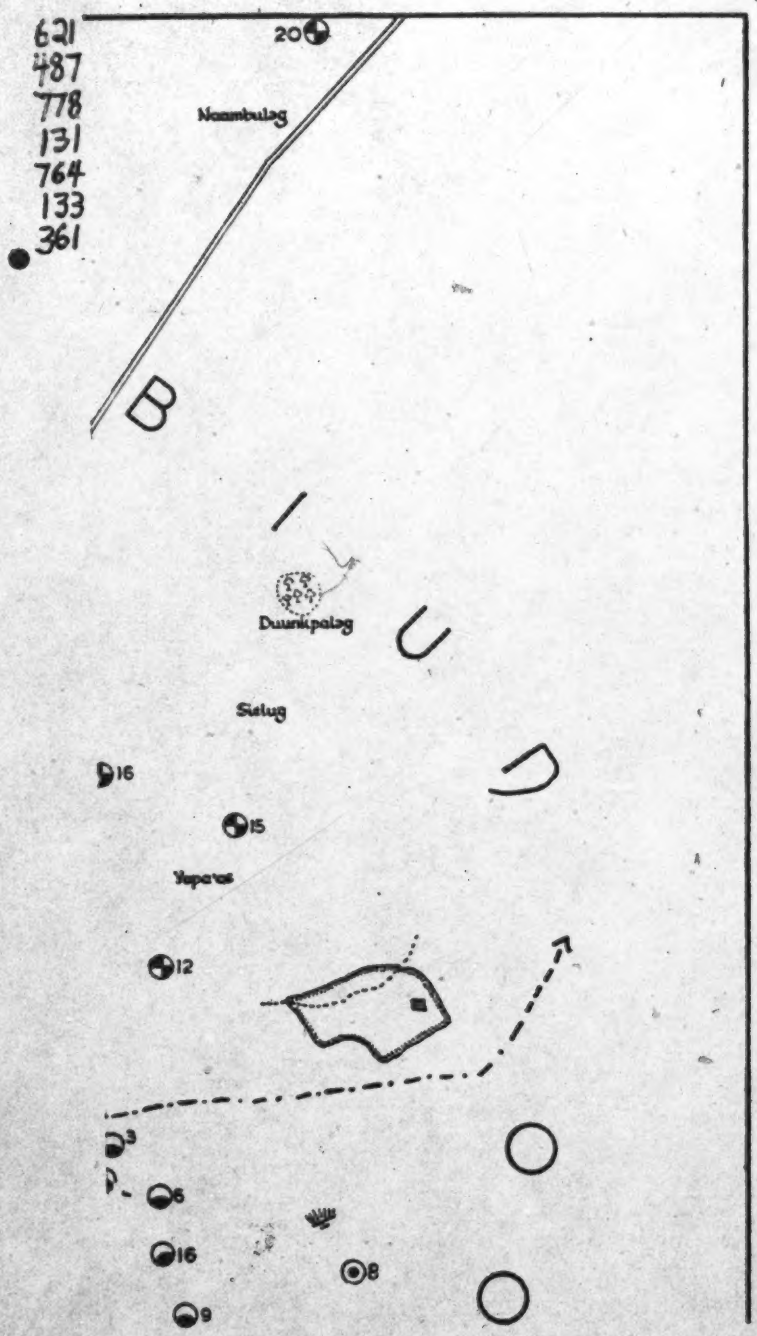
2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

621
487
778
131
764
133
361



[End-map(C)]

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11



[End-map.(D)]

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

621
487
778
131
764
133
361

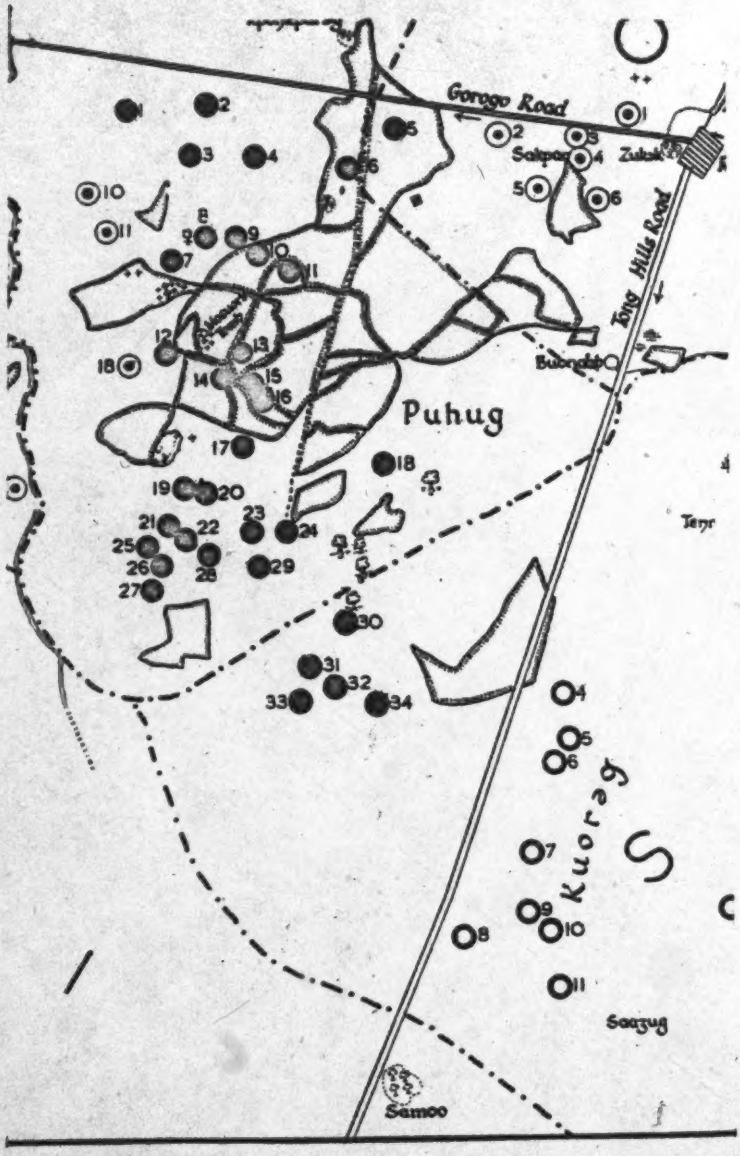
SE

The map includes the whole territorial extent of Tongo proper (*Tɔŋ-Naŋ*) boundaries. It shows *all* the homesteads of Puhug section and Guŋ proper homesteads on the outskirts of the other sections (i.e. in Kuorəg, Seug, and The map also shows *all* the homesteads of Gbirug and of the Yakəra sec

[End-Map(E)]

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
FE11 Tallensi FE11

621
487
778
131
764
133
361

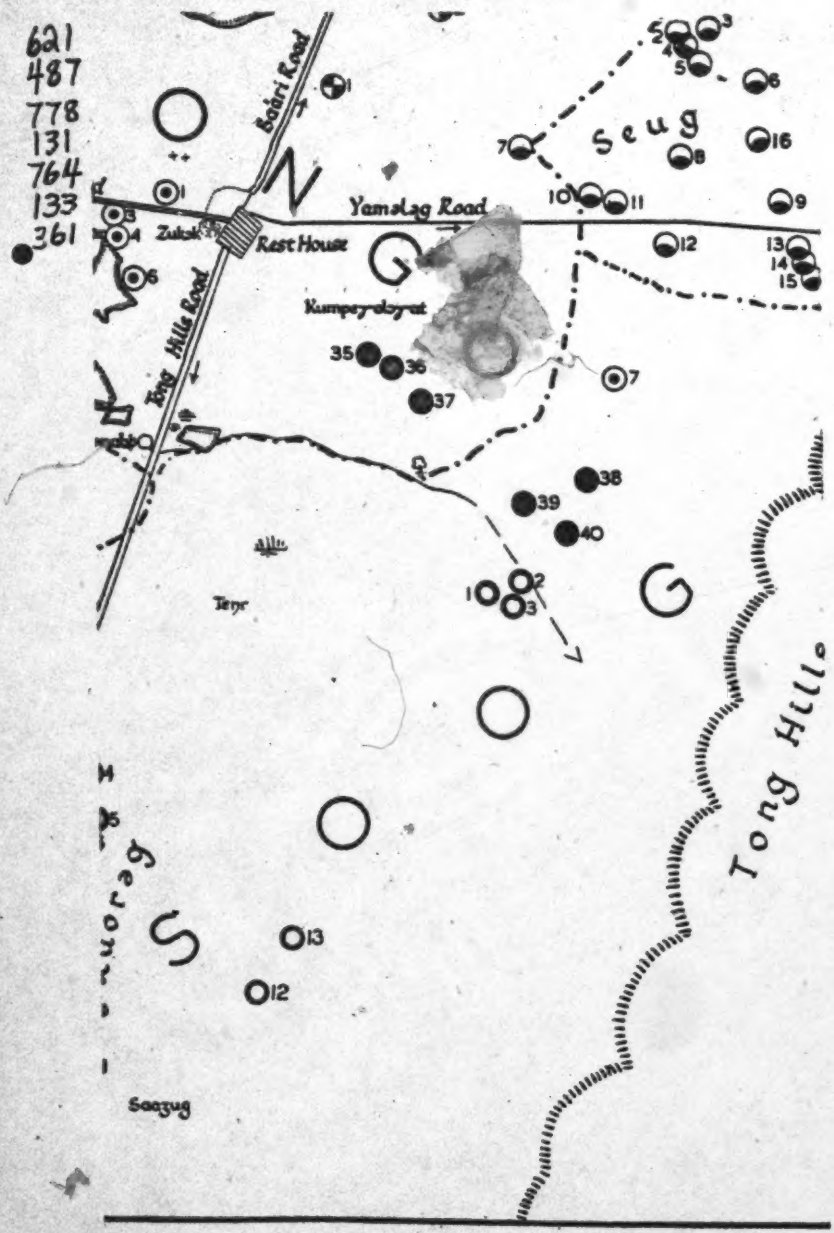


SKETCH MAP OF TONGO AND PARTS OF

o proper (*Tɔŋ-Nayiri*) but not all the homesteads within its social
n and Guŋ proper (*Guŋ* on the map) but leaves out about a dozen
Kuorəg, Seug, and Dekpieŋ).
d of the Yakəra section of Zubiuŋ. It shows most of the Zubiuŋ-

Kpayan
few Wal
The
covering

[End-map (F)]

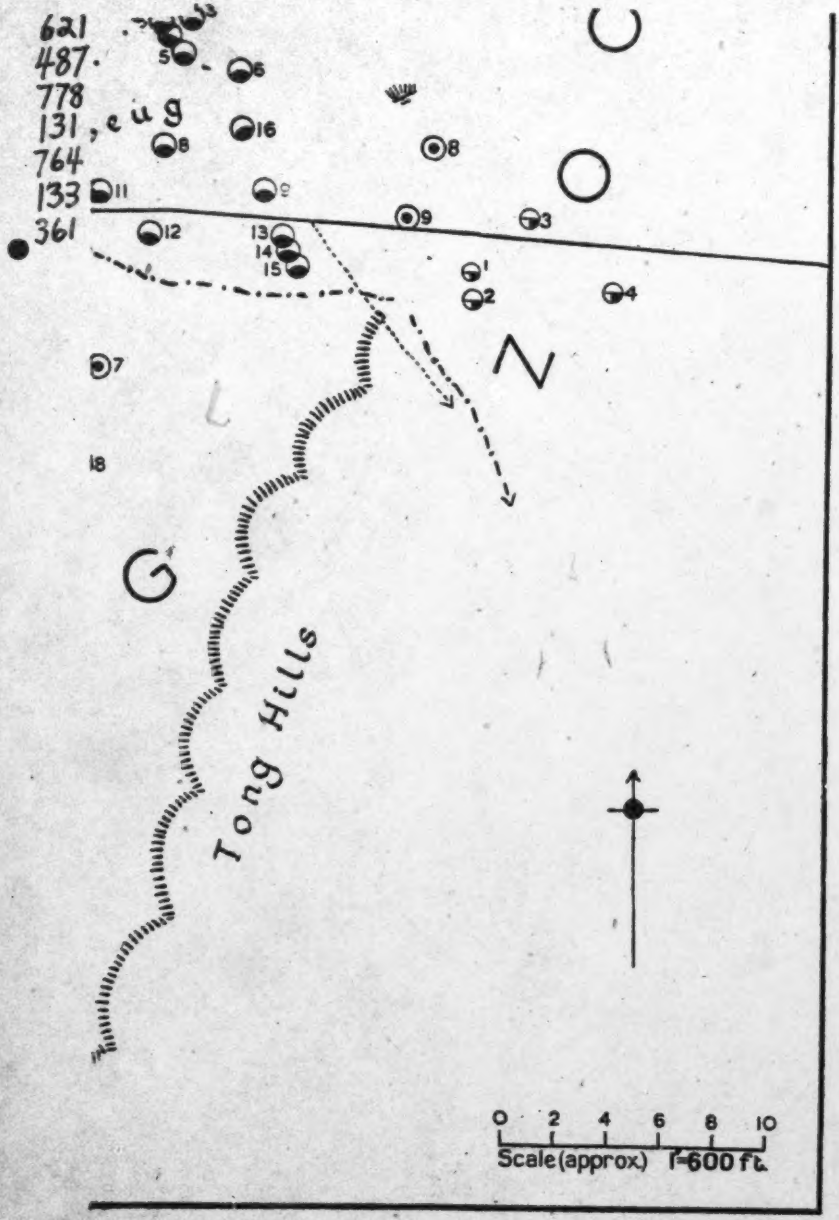


PARTS OF ADJACENT SETTLEMENTS

Kpayara yayar homesteads, leaving out two or three on the outskirts, few Wakii and Zoo homesteads.

The Farm Boundaries shown indicate the situation of only a small covering the map with crosses, only a few of the founding ancestors' gi

[END-MAP (6)]



ITS

r three on the outskirts, but no Zubiun-Yapaas homesteads. It shows only a

situation of only a small selection of Tongo home farms. Similarly, to avoid
he founding ancestors' graves have been marked.

[End-map (H)]

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11

of his lineage or clan, other than those whom he describes as his 'fathers' or 'sons'.

Every Tale clan is anchored to a particular locality from which it takes its name. In the central area of Taleland, around the Tong Hills, the present clan settlements appear to date back not less than eight to ten generations. But they have not been and are not territorially static. There are no strict territorial boundaries between adjacent settlements. The homesteads of a settlement merge with those of the adjacent settlements, and the boundaries between them are definable only in social terms, as a function of their ecological and politico-ritual relations at a given time. In the same way every segment of a clan—that is, each of its component maximal lineages—is anchored to a local subdivision of the clan settlement, though many of its members may be dispersed elsewhere.

A striking feature of Tale social organization is the system of inter-clan linkages which constitutes one of the principal forces of cohesion in the society. The genealogically and socially autonomous maximal lineage or clan is not a closed group. The component maximal lineages that form the segments of adjacent clans have ties of clanship identical with those that unite them to one another within their respective clans. Thus if two adjacent clans have segments A, B, C, and D, E, F, G, respectively, then A (but not B or C) may have clanship ties with D (but not with E, F, or G); B may have clanship ties only with E, and C with F. Each of these maximal lineages also has clanship ties with segments of other neighbouring clans. Thus each component maximal lineage of a clan has a field of clanship that includes the other segments of the clan as well as segments of other clans. This results in a network of interlocking clanship ties that embraces all the separate clans of Taleland. All the Talis clans and the main block of Namoo clans are interlocked in this way in two clusters which are in turn similarly connected at certain points. Moreover, this system of linkages ties the Tale aggregate on to adjacent clans of other neighbouring 'tribes'. Thus we observe that at this level of social structure—the skeletal level, so to speak—as in its territorial and cultural relationship to neighbouring 'tribes', Tale society is a segment of a greater society. The network of inter-clan linkages is one of the principal factors by which the socio-geographic region we have called Taleland is differentiated as a distinct segment of this greater society.

It is also one of the main factors of social equilibrium in Tale society. Dissension between neighbouring clans is kept in check by the mediation of maximal lineages linked by identical ties to both; and warfare is inhibited from disrupting the entire social order by the intervention of social and ritual obligations arising *inter alia* out of the fact that enemies are related directly or indirectly by clanship ties. It is this, in part, that gives Tale wars the complexion of acute family quarrels.

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11

PLATE 2

593
241
361

a. The domestic family is the matrix of kinship. A family party out lifting ground-nuts on the home farm. Their homestead is in the background. From right to left: the head of the family, his infant daughter, his adult son, the latter's wife and baby, the family head's wife and daughter

782

b. A domestic sacrifice: cleaning and apportioning the meat of the goat at the conclusion of the sacrifice. Banan-Teroog, his senior wife, and his junior wife's two children. The old woman is holding a chicken ready for the next sacrifice

[facing p. 33]

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11

CHAPTER III

THE HOMESTEAD AND THE JOINT FAMILY

Homestead and Family—a Single Social Entity

361 592 PHYSICALLY a Tale settlement is an aggregation of homesteads irregularly distributed at varying distances from one another.[1] A homestead is the domicile of a domestic family. The edifice of pile and thatch, and its occupants, constitute a single entity. There is no word for either apart from the other. The native concept, *yir* (pl. *yca*), a house, means primarily the joint family as a coherent social unit residing in its own dwelling. An unoccupied homestead is a dead shell, left to crumble into ruins.

592 When a homestead is abandoned it becomes a *daboog* (pl. *dabaar*), a word applied both to an empty homestead in any stage of decay and to the site of a former homestead, and carrying two main and complementary implications that spring directly from the dominance of the lineage principle in Tale social values. *Daboog* stands for something good and worthy of praise when it refers to the site of a person's father's or grandfather's homestead, or, by extension, to the site or locality of an ancestor's homestead. A *daboog* in this sense is a symbol of the origins and a portent of the good fortune of an existing lineage; it is an object of personal attachment and religious reverence; though vacant it is not dead; the spirits of the ancestors still abide there, and it may be re-occupied some day; it is a symbol of the living continuity of a line of descent. *Daboog* can also be used to describe the site of a former human habitation left deserted and forlorn through the extinction of a line of descent. No ancestor spirits dwell there; it is an accursed spot, a monument of human sin, and a symbol of the most terrible mystical retribution that can befall a Talɔŋ. A curse one sometimes hears uttered when a grave injury has been suffered at the hands of an unknown person is: 'May his house lie in ruins and tobacco be grown there (*K'u yir doon daboog ka ba cy taba waal ncŋha*).' A ruined homestead provides an exceptionally fertile patch of soil, suitable for growing tobacco. If a man's line of descent is extinguished, there will be no one to claim ownership of his *daboog*, and anyone who wishes will come and plant tobacco there.

592 769 A homestead is always built for a particular family. From the day when the site is chosen it is the scene of human labour, of organized co-operation, and of religious and moral preoccupations. It must be lived in from the laying of the foundations, lest evil mystical agencies desecrate it. Ancestor shrines are immediately installed in it; for the spirits of a man's fathers and forefathers abide in his house, presiding

[1] Cf. *Dynamics of Clanship*, ch. x.

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11

over its destinies just as they controlled its social and economic activities in their lifetime.

A new homestead is erected for preference on the site of a man's father's or other patrilineal ancestor's *daboog*. Such a site is consecrated through having been the scene of human residence in the past, and through the abiding association with it of the ancestors who formerly lived there. If a man builds on virgin land, the site must not only be technically prepared for habitation, it must also be ritually won for human ends. Hence the tendaana under whose ritual jurisdiction the spot falls must first consecrate it, and the new dwelling must be magically protected against those vague personifications of irrational maleficence, mystically dangerous stones (*kubeet*) and trees (*tebees*). So complete is the identification of the family with its dwelling, that if persistent misfortune dogs the family after its removal to a new homestead, and all other ritual measures seem to have failed, the onus is finally thrown on the homestead itself. 'The house has not accepted them (*yir la pu diebame*)', the diviners discover. The whole complex of mystical agencies which endow the house with its moral value for the family is against them.

In the single homestead, as in the settlement of which it is the elementary cell and the structural epitome, Tale social organization has three fundamental aspects—material, associational, and moral. They represent the three major kinds of interests and ends that govern Tale social life. And though all forms of social relations among the Tallensi always have these three classes of components, they do not always work in harmony with one another.

In the homestead, as in the settlement, social relations move in two planes: the plane of lineage relations, in which the canon of agnatic descent dominates corporate action and directs individual conduct, and the plane of domestic relations, in which the bonds of marriage and parenthood, and the bilateral ties of kinship in the narrowest sense, control the behaviour of people towards one another. The persons who form a unit in one plane fall into separate, opposed units in the other. Husband and wife belong to mutually exclusive lineages; brothers by the same father but different mothers belong to separate matricentral segments of the family and are nuclei of independent conjugal families.

The Ideas and Values embodied in the Homestead

It is far truer of the Talɔŋ than of the modern Englishman to say that his home is his castle, though not as literally as Cardinall imagines. The natives of these parts, he declares, build their homesteads solidly and a bow-shot apart in order the better to defend them against hostile neighbours.[1] This romantic explanation, however, has

[1] Cardinall, A. W., *Natives of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast*, pp. 2, 14.

3: Fortes - E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11

592 361 no foundation in fact. The climate, the kind of raw material which is plentifully at hand, the economic system, and the social organization of the natives rather than the alleged lawlessness of former times, determine their mode of house-building. In any case, homesteads very often stand closer than fifty paces together, the distance at which a mediocre shot can hit a tree—though I have seen an arrow carry four times that distance.

592 181 A Talɔŋ's home is his castle in the psychological rather than the material sense. It is the centre and fount of his major interests, his dominant purposes, his deepest emotional attachments, and his whole scheme of values; it is his shelter, his storehouse, the stage of his life's drama. The Tallensi, unlike many African peoples, have no age sets or initiation schools. A person grows up and receives his entire education at home. If he practises a craft, such as leatherwork, or is a diviner, his home is his workshop or consulting place.

As an adult, all his economic enterprise issues from his home and is devoted primarily to its upkeep. Unless he is one of the few *nouveaux riches* of to-day he keeps all his material possessions there, and houses all his livestock within its walls. His sex life, in maturity, is centred there. His children, the supreme object of his aspirations, are born and grow up in his home under his care and control. He worships his immediate forbears there. His personal destiny, past, present, and future, revolves about his home, its stages perpetuated in the many shrines and other ritual objects that are housed in it. He receives his friends and relatives at home, and dispenses hospitality there; and if he [461] has nothing to do would as lief recline under the shade tree at his own gateway as go making calls on others. Even the young men who like gallivanting about the markets spend much of their leisure at home.

592 181 626 The quintessence of his home, to a Talɔŋ, resides in his children, and above all his sons, the vehicles of his immortality. That is the essential meaning of *mar yiri*, 'to have a house'. Ask any native what happens to a man who does not adequately expiate a sacrilege such as murder. '*U yiri ymaarɔme*—his house will fall to pieces,' is the answer, given with emphatic and solemn conviction, and often with circumstantial illustrations from experience or hearsay. A parent curses an insubordinate child, a chief or tendaana curses a clansman who has grossly insulted him, '*u ku nye yiri*—he will not see (i.e. have) a house', that is, he will die without offspring to perpetuate his line and to sacrifice to his spirit; and this is an extremely serious matter. It never fails to bring the culprit to heel with humble apologies. On the other hand, '*i na nye yiri*—you will have a house', is the most propitious blessing a diviner can convey to a man from his ancestor spirits.

592 593 Patrilocal residence and the tendency for the lineage to be localized give a man's domestic life greater continuity than a woman's. His natal family and his conjugal family are both strung on the same

•361
592

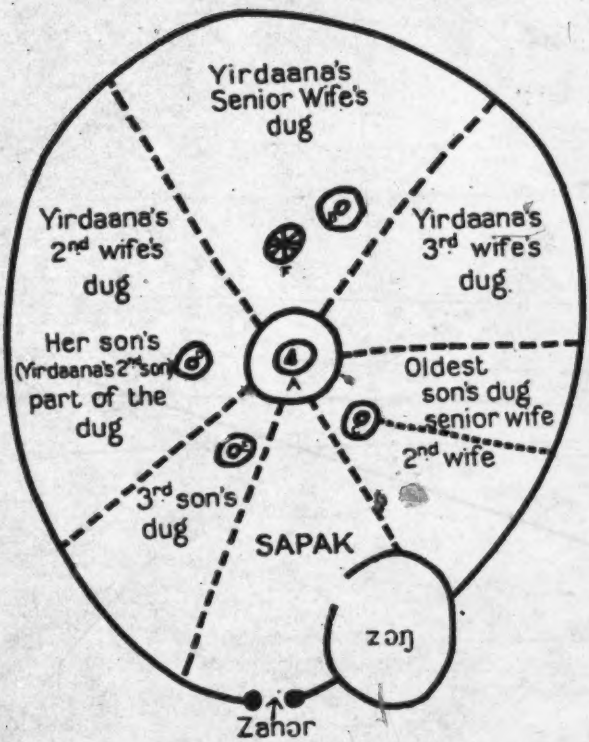


FIG. 2*a*. Diagram (not to scale) showing the layout of the different *dugsi* in a large joint family homestead. The head of the homestead (*yirdaana*) has three living wives and three married sons, one with two wives.

A — Principal granary (*buur tenta'ar*) of the *yirdaana*
B — Small granary belonging to *yirdaana*
C — Oldest son's private small granary
D — Second son's private small granary
E — Third son's private small granary
F — *Yirdaana's Yin* shrine

[p. 52]

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11

361
592

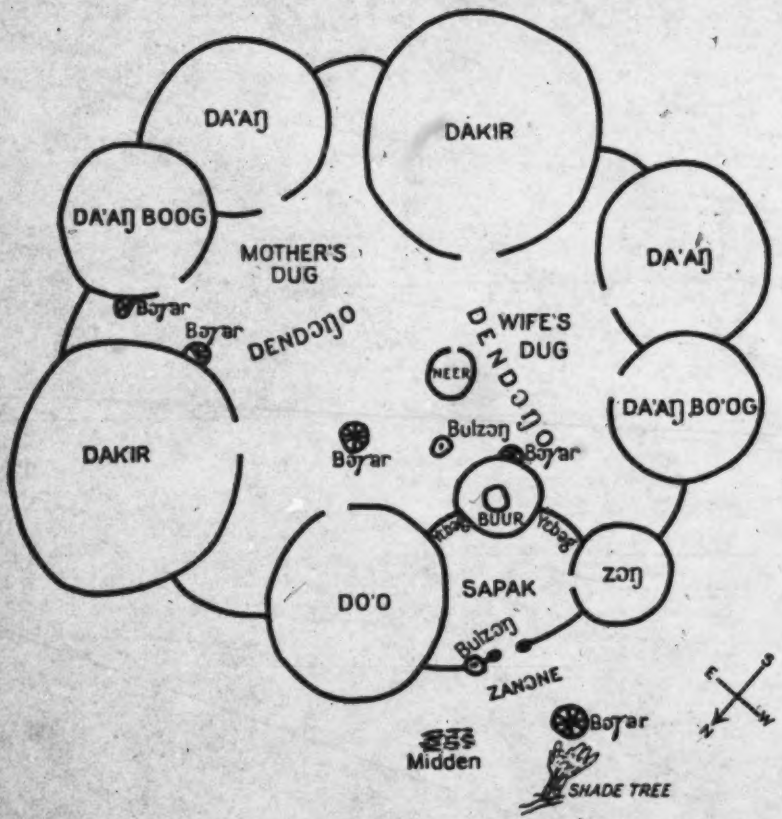


FIG. 2b. Diagram of Ondieso's homestead, showing the layout of the quarters and the rooms. (Scale: 1:45 approx.)

Glossary

Bɔɣar	Ancestor shrine
Buur	Granary
Bulzɔŋ	Shelter for hens
Da'aŋ	Unroofed dry-season kitchen
Da'aŋboog	Storeroom and wet-season kitchen
Dakir	Sleeping-room
Do'o	Room for adolescent boys
Dendɔŋo	Open courtyard
Sapak	Livestock yard
Zanɔne	Open space at the gateway where the men foregather
Zɔŋ	The homestead head's special room
Neer	Grinding-room
Ybag	Low diviiding wall

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
FE11 Tallensi FE11

351 ingress of wild animals—in particular, the ubiquitous and thievish hyena, which prowls the settlements at night in search of offal and unprotected small stock—and the egress of their own livestock. Every [622] gateway in Taleland must be barred at night, except that of the Chief of Tongo. This is a strict rule, and it is one of the conventions defining the social personality of the Chief of Tongo. It is also a sign of the privacy of the domestic unit in respect of the intimate life of its members.

351 Entering the *zanɔr* of a homestead, the visitor finds himself in the *sapak* or *nayaŋ*, the cattle-yard. It is the dirtiest and most insanitary 556 spot in the homestead, its undressed surface being strewn with rubbish 231 and with the dung or droppings of livestock, if the owner has any. [514] One often sees human excrement in a corner, for young children and sick people defecate there at night. Ɔndieso is a very poor man, even by Tale standards, as the sagging roofs and dilapidated walls of his homestead lead one to suspect, possessing neither cattle nor sheep nor goats, and but a handful of poultry. Hence his *sapak* is very small, less than a dozen square yards in area. Ɔndieso's neighbour, the Gbizug tɛndaana, has a large *sapak*, about 80 square yards in area; but he has cattle, sheep, goats, and a couple of donkeys, not to speak of many fowls and guinea-fowls.

● [361] From the *sapak* one can see how the cylindrical rooms are laid out 342 and distributed in the roughly circular or oval area occupied by the homestead. The first room, usually on the right as one enters through the *zanɔr*, is the *zɔŋ*. It is the only room with a doorway in the *sapak*, and it has a special significance in the structure of the house. It is the room *par excellence* of the head of the house (*yirdaana*), fittingly placed between the open space before the *zanɔr*, with which his public activities are associated, and the *sapak*, which shelters his most valuable possessions, his livestock. Cattle, sheep, and goats constitute material wealth, [556] the repository of labour and thrift; but they mean much more than that to the Talɔŋ. They are pre-eminently the property of men, associated with men's major interests. They are the medium by means of which wives are acquired, and thus posterity assured. They are also the [782] principal objects of sacrifice, by means of which the natives maintain their relations with their ancestor spirits and other mystical powers. In bad weather the *zɔŋ* itself is used to shelter the livestock. Inside the *zɔŋ*, along the wall, little cubicles are made for the *yirdaana*'s fowls to nest in. A man of substance often has a double *zɔŋ*, consisting of two chambers with a low doorway in the partition wall. The rear chamber is used as a stall for young calves or sheep, and the front chamber, communicating with the *sapak*, as a stall for a milch-cow or a donkey, for the night.

342 The *zɔŋ* is identified with the *yirdaana*'s status and social personality. 778 It is a bare room, for a man does not keep valuable possessions, weapons,

7:Lynn G-5 (1932-1936) 1937 FE11 Tallensi FE11

134 difficult. In areas where the flow of storm water is particularly swift, the top soil has been completely scoured away, leaving bare expanses of sub-soil. Where this has occurred close to roads, the rapid run-off results in considerable damage. After a very heavy rain sections of the road may be washed completely away. (An example of this occurred in August, 1936, on the road between Bolgatanga and Zuarungu.)

Primitive Nature of the People.

105 The people of North Mamprusi are divided into a number of tribes; they differ in their customs and speak different dialects of Mole, but their methods of living and farming are the same. They are all primitive pagans, with simple requirements. Little or no dress is worn other than a goatskin by men, and leaves or string by the women. There is no indigenous cotton industry, and cotton goods, which are increasingly worn to-day, especially around market centres, are all imported or manufactured by strangers, generally Moshis, in the Zongos.

Absence of Villages.

●361 An important feature of the district is that the people live in scattered compounds, unlike the Dagombas and South Mamprusis who live in villages and hamlets. The distance between compounds varies considerably; at one time it was probably about the length of a good arrow shot, but closer building around centres of importance, as near markets and lorry termini, is resulting in the formation of towns. This can be seen at places like Bolgatanga, and near Government stations. Each compound resembles a miniature fort and in the past there is little doubt that it served as such: it is roughly elliptical in shape and consists of a number of round mud houses opening inwards; and the whole is enclosed by a high mud wall. Roofs are made either flat, of beaten mud, or conical, and thatched. A single narrow doorway, which can be heavily barricaded, gives entrance to the compound: the space inside is divided into compartments by low walls. Livestock are kept in an open compartment near the entrance. The land lying between compounds is farmed intensively and manuring forms a definite part of the farming system.

[231]
[241]

Fixed Cultivation.

[161] The high density of population necessitates a system of "fixed" cultivation. It is difficult to say whether the need for
241 "fixed" cultivation resulted in the people living on their land in